

The Harriet

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18 March 1952

MEMORANDUM OF RECORD

FROM: Assistant to the Director

SUBJECT: PBS Conference on Current Status of Nevius Tract.

Those Attending:

W. E. Reynolds, Commissioner, PBS

W. E. Wolf, Deputy Director (Administration)

Assistant to the Director

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1. Mr. Reynolds reports that title to the Nevius Tract is currently vested in PBS. However, PBS can under existing laws be compelled to declare the property surplus and offer it for disposition should the government have no specific plans for its utilization. To avoid this prospect of a forced sale, presumably to real estate interests, Reynolds participated in a stratagem designed to keep the property on the government roles. He testified in favor of the Murdock Bill (H. R. 5176 - Bill to Establish National Monument on the Nevius Tract) which was introduced at the request of Albert P. Greensfelder, a member of the National Capital Park and Planning Commission, St. Louis, Mo., proposing that a memorial be erected on the Nevius site. Greensfelder is exceedingly anxious that the tract be not surrendered by the government inasmuch as it is an extension of the Mall and is therefore one of the most desirable memorial sites in the nation. Because the Greensfelder memorial proposal was obviously incapable of winning approval from the Congress, the Public Works Committee drafted a Calendar Bill which would vest title in the property in the National Park Division of the Interior Department. This Bill furthermore provides that any proposal to use the site for a government structure be referred to the Congress for approval.

2. A Calendar Bill can be introduced in the House only on the first and third Mondays of each month. There it can be blocked by a single objection. After two weeks it can once again be reported and on this second go-round a minimum of three objections would be required to block it. Mr. Reynolds was queried on the desirability of CIA's taking the initiative to see that the Bill was blocked that title might remain with PBS. Mr. Reynolds reports

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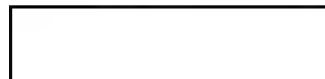
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that while he obviously cannot associate himself with any such stratagem in view of his previous testimony on the Murdock Bill, he would concur unofficially on the advisability of such a move. Mr. Wolf pointed out that it would obviously be to CIA's advantage to have title remain with PBS that CIA might thus avoid the necessity for justifying its project before the Public Works Committee of the House. Mr. Wolf agreed to consult with Counsel and explore the advisability of this stratagem.

3. Mr. Reynolds reports that in the event funds are appropriated for construction on the Nevius Tract, approval of the project can probably be had from both the Commission of Fine Arts and the National Capital Park and Planning Commission. The former is especially interested in preventing the Tract from being declared surplus. Reynolds reports that he explored the suggestion of a government building in conversation with the Chairman of the Fine Arts Commission without disclosing CIA interest, and that the Chairman welcomed the proposal. He need not therefore anticipate objection by the Commission; instead the project would probably be backed.

4. Mr. Reynolds referred to the assumptions prepared by the National Security Resources Board in justification of a dispersal program. While admitting the validity of these assumptions, he strongly contests the conclusions, contending that the recommendation to disperse a distance of twenty miles would tax the government with an impossible administrative problem in the management and operation of those structures. He hopes that CIA in its comments on those assumptions will take a parallel position and recommend that the dispersal belt be limited to twelve miles.

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